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SUBJECT: MFA Refutes U.S. Rejection of Belarusian Elections

¶1. At a March 23 press briefing, Belarusian MFA Press Secretary Andrei Popov refuted press statements from the White House and State Department denouncing the results of the March 19 presidential elections in Belarus. Popov reminded the journalists that the Belarusian people have made their choice and "like it or not," the U.S. must respect that choice since the U.S. does not have the right to determine who will be president in Belarus. Popov also claimed that the United States' Electoral College system violates the OSCE's direct election principles. However, Popov expressed Belarus' readiness to cooperate with the U.S. in areas of common interest.

¶2. Below is the MFA's translation of the exchange between Popov and a journalist.

Begin MFA's Translation of Text:

Correspondent: "During this week the official representatives of the White House and the State Department have made a number of statements to the effect that the United States allegedly "cannot accept the results of the presidential elections" in Belarus. The Belarusian Foreign Ministry has been leaving these statements unanswered. Why?"

Andrei Popov: "Actually, there is nothing to comment here. The United States did not, does not and will not have a mandate to reject or recognize the elections results in other independent states. It is not up to the White House to determine who is going to be the President of Belarus. In our country the President is elected by the people, and not in the street, but at the polling stations. The Belarusian people have made their choice, and the United States has nothing to do with it, whether it likes it or not.

I want to underline the following: if the United States respects the Belarusian people, it must respect their choice as well. Moreover, we cannot accept lecturing from the country which, in total violation of the OSCE principles, does not have direct presidential elections, and where those who get fewer votes than their rivals become presidents.

Nevertheless, I want to stress that responsible states should be above ideological and political biases and look forward to acting for the benefit of their peoples. This is what the Belarusian side proceeds from. We confirm our readiness to interact with the US in the spheres where we have common interests, on the basis of equality and mutual respect."

End Text

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